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ARTICLES:

(1) Transcript of RBC TV news report of Kevin Maher's speech on Feb. 27 in Okinawa

RBC TV NEWS REPORT
February 27, 2006

In a speech today, Kevin Maher, director for security affairs at the American Embassy in Japan -- the responsible embassy official on the realignment of American bases in Japan -- stressed that unless Futenma Air Station is relocated to the coastal portion of Camp Schwab, the reduction of US Marines on Okinawa and the reversion of facilities on the south-central portion of the main island will not be implemented.

Director of Security Affairs Kevin Maher of the US Embassy has been selected as the next consul general in Okinawa, starting this summer. He gave his briefing at a speech forum sponsored by Kyodo News. In his presentation, Director Maher brought up such reasons for deciding to relocate Futenma Air Station to a site on the coastal portion of Camp Schwab as there being little impact on the safety of the local residential area, little noise problem, and the need to maintain a deterrent capability.

On the other hand, he stressed that if the relocation to Camp Schwab's coastal portion did not take place, the reduction in

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Okinawa's burden would not take place. Maher also pointed out that coordination with local communities is the role of the Japanese government, and that if the realignment as planned is looked at in its entirety, it will become a plus for Okinawa. He stated that for the realignment to be successful, Okinawa's cooperation was essential, and he sought the prefecture's understanding.

(2) Editorial: Kevin Maher should know how angry his remarks have made the prefectural residents

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 5) (Full)
March 1, 2006

Speaking on the issue of relocating MCAS Futenma, Kevin Maher, the chief of the security unit of the US Embassy in Japan noted that he did not think the basic plan to build a facility on the coastal portion of Camp Schwab in the Henoko district of Nago City would be revised.

On this issue, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, too, took a negative view recently, stating his displeasure at revised plans being floated. Although we might say that Maher's comments were just falling in line with the Pentagon's view, the US government should know full well that a stance of its "running ahead first with the coastal plan" has fired up the anger of local residents.

Looking at the local communities, we find the joint committee of three districts of Nago City, including Henoko, clearly opposed to the coastal plan. The council of thirteen districts along the sea coast of Nago also is making a resolution opposing the plan.

It is evident that the alternate facility will create new dangers and will destroy the quiet living conditions of the area with explosions and aircraft noise. One may say that it is only natural for the surrounding areas to oppose the coastal plan.

On March 5, a large rally of prefectural residents will be held at the multipurpose ground of the seaside park in Ginowan City to protest the relocation plan. This is not just a local issue; It has become a problem taken up by all residents in the prefecture.

We would like the rally to send a strong message that the new base construction plan is unacceptable.

The agreement reached late last October between Japan and the US was only an interim report; it was not supposed to be the final report. That is what the Foreign Ministry and the Defense Agency have been explaining to prefectural residents. Whatever has been compiled by the end of March is supposed to be put in the final report. We cannot forget the promise that the central government made to local communities repeatedly, namely, that nothing would proceed or be decided that went over the heads of the local communities.

Maier also developed the "package argument" when he talked about the realignment of US forces in Japan, stating that if the relocation of Futenma Air Station was not according to the coastal plan, the reversion and consolidation of base facilities in the central and southern portions of the main Okinawa island would not be possible.

However, we would like to once more stop and take a look at that statement.

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Do not the plans to consolidate facilities and the arguments for reversions stem from the fact that those facilities are no longer needed? Isn't this proof that even if the facilities were scaled down in scope, there would be no inconvenience suffered? If such is the case, isn't it odd in itself to make the alternate facility for MCAS Futenma a part of a package deal? Moreover, one is compelled to say that to argue that the realignment plan "is to the advantage of Okinawa" is nothing but the naked logic of Occupation mentality.

Maier is slated to become the next consul general for Okinawa. However, we would like to ask him to step back a bit from a military point of view and properly perceive his role as a "diplomat of a democratic country" that does not trample on the right to a peaceful life of the residents of a prefecture where 75% of the US forces in Japan are deployed or otherwise infringe on their human rights.

(3) USFJ realignment: Government at odds with US over "package argument" in resolving specific cases

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 1) (Full)
March 1, 2006

(TOKYO)

The Defense Facilities Administration Agency (DFAA) on Feb. 28 issued this view regarding the expression "unified package" that is stated in the interim report on the realignment of US forces in Japan: "It does not mean that the implementation of all cases are connected; (it means that) if it is possible, we will pursue the implementation of some individually." In connection with the so-called "package argument," Kevin Maier, security unit chief of the US Embassy in Japan in a speech on Feb. 27 made this statement regarding such issues as the relocation of MCAS Futenma and the reversion of facilities south of Kadena Air Base: "If the contents of the interim report are implemented individually, everything would fall apart." The two statements underscore a split in views between Japan and the United States.

The view of DFAA was issued to a news company in reply to written questions from the city of Tomakomai (Hokkaido) regarding the Air Self-Defense Force's Chitose Base, which is to be the location for training of F-15 fighter aircraft coming from Kadena Air Base.

The package argument is explained as such: "In the 2 plus 2 joint document (omitted portion), the expression 'unified package' refers to planning the implementation as a whole in terms of maintaining deterrence capabilities and reduction of the local burden." If the DFAA view is applicable to Okinawa, then the

relocation of MCAS Futenma to the coastal portion of Camp Schwab in Nago City, the transfer of 8,000 US Marines to locations outside of the prefecture, and the reversions of facilities south of Kadena Air Base are not necessarily linked together.

This view differs from the US government's explanation that makes the implementation of the coastal plan a condition for reducing the burden on Okinawa.

A senior DFAA official stated: "The US side in working level talks between Japan and the US also has been asserting (the

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package argument), but the Japanese side has never had such a perception."

(4) Mizuho Town mayor accepts proposal for joint use of Yokota Air Base between USFJ and SDF; Decision without sufficient information rough-and-ready; Now is good opportunity to seek reduced financial burden

MAINICHI (Page 6) (Excerpts)
February 24, 2006

By Social News Section reporter Kenji Kimura

In the ongoing realignment of US force stationed in Japan, Koemon Ishizuka, mayor of Mizuho Town, Tokyo, has decided to accept a proposal for joint use of US Forces' Yokota Air Base, which extends across five cities and one town, between US force in Japan (USFJ) and the Self-Defense Forces (SDF). The proposal has been in the interim report issued last October. The town is situated north of the base. The mayor has made the decision, based on the judgment that there would be no major change, if SDF troops were transferred to Yokota. It, however, appears premature to make such a decision at a stage where the government has yet to provide more information on the realignment issue. The governments of Japan and the US should pursue far-reaching discussions without regard to the March target set for the compilation of a final report.

Three points concerning Yokota Air Base in the interim report are: (1) the Air-Self Defense Force's (ASDF) Air Defense Command Headquarters is to be transferred from Fuchu, Tokyo, and a new joint operations coordination center is to be established for the USFJ Headquarters; (2) joint military-civilian use of the air base is to be considered, while taking into consideration that such a use should not damage the operational capability of the air base; and (3) a reduction in airspace under the US military's control is to be looked into. Mizuho Town has strongly opposed the joint military-civilian use of Yokota Air Base as leading to a deteriorated living environment and the perpetuation of the presence of the air base.

Mayor Ishizuka expressed his decision to accept the joint USFJ-SDF use of Yokota Air Base at a consultative meeting of the Town Assembly held on Feb. 11. The decision to accept the joint use of the air base limited to the SDF alone was motivated by the desire to receive generous local development allowances from the state. To that end, the town has accepted the interim report ahead of other municipalities in order to demonstrate its presence as a model town among those that host USFJ facilities. In a related effort, it has also suspended the movement opposing joint military-civilian use of air base facilities, though its previous stance had been against such a use.

Mizuho Town has a population of 33,976 as of Jan 1, 2006. It provides 2.1 square kilometers or about 13% of the entire area of the town (16.83 square kilometers) for the use of Yokota Air Base. Noise levels were measured 34.2 times a day on average in 2004. The presence of the air base is a major disturbing factor for town building, and the government has provided financial assistance to the town so that it can make up for the loss. Government subsidies for measures for military base-related measures totaled 1.11407 billion yen in the town's fiscal 2004 financial statement, accounting for 8.5% of revenues in its

general account.

The Defense Facilities Administrative Agency (DFAA) Regional Defense Facilities Administrative Bureau (RDFAB), Tokyo, located in Saitama City, on Jan. 30 submitted a written reply to questions asked by local governments in the vicinity of Yokota Air Base. According to the RDFAB, the transfer of the current framework of approximately 600 personnel is expected with the relocation of the ASDF headquarters to Yokota. There is no plan to permanently transfer air units to Yokota, but the RDFAB report noted as an example that there were about 400 flights last year to transfer SDF personnel among bases throughout the country. Regarding measures to reduce burdens of municipalities that host the air base, the report simply noted that the issue was a future agenda item. For joint military-civilian use, it went no further than to say that Japan and the US would look into such a possibility more specifically in the future.

The establishment of the new joint operations coordination center requires special attention. The main aim of establishing such a facility is said to be to promote bilateral cooperation on the missile defense system (MD), which the two countries are to develop in fiscal 2006 as a joint project. It is one of the concepts that symbolize the policy of integrating Japanese and US military operations in the realignment plan along with the transfer of the US Military 1st Headquarters (Washington) to Camp Zama (Kanagawa Prefecture) and the establishment of the Ground Self-Defense Force's central readiness command.

Commenting on the planned new joint operations coordination center, Tetsuo Maeda, professor of disarmament and security, pointed out, "It can be said that the planned facility is a joint headquarters or a combined command for Japan and the US. But since such names could be taken to mean (a setting for) the exercise of the right of collective self-defense, which is banned under Article 9 of the Constitution, it had to bear such a complicated name." Though the establishment of the center involves serious issues like that, the report provided by the RDFAB simply noted that intensive coordination of views would be undertaken regarding such aspects as a concrete form of the planned organization and personnel.

No more information has been provided though it has been three months or so since the issuance of the interim report. Five municipalities other than Mizuho Town remain cautious. Joichi Kitagawa, mayor of Akishima City, located south of the base, said, "We should reach a judgment, based on a final report. In the meantime, we should urge the government to provide more information." Fussa City is recruiting opinions from citizens, by carrying replies provided by the DFAA Tokyo Bureau in its bulletin.

The realignment of Yokota Air Base will be the largest ever since the Kanto Plan, under which US forces' facilities located on the Kanto Plain were integrated at Yokota in the 1970s. Concerned municipalities should not give up their pursuit of overall return of the base facilities in the future, while seeing the realignment this time as an opportunity to seek a reduction in base burdens once in several decades.

(5) MSDF Iraq assistance: Information about port location also leaked out in e-mail from seamen to family

MAINICHI (Page 9) (Full)
Evening, March 1, 2006

Another incident of information leakage from the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) has been discovered. A seaman stationed aboard the large-scale transport ship Ohsumi (8,900 tons), which embarked from its MSDF Kure Base in Hiroshima in Feb. 2004 to

Iraq for assistance duties leaked out information into the Internet contained in his e-mails to his family and in internal documents. The e-mail contained the name of the ports and cities where the ship was heading for. A senior Defense Agency (JDA) called the incident of "revealing the ports of destination a serious issue."

The Ohsumi left the MSDF's Kure Base on Feb. 14, 2004, in order to transport weapons and equipment for the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) carrying out activities in Iraq under the special measures law for Iraq reconstruction assistance. It stopped in the port of Mororan in Hokkaido to load on armored vehicles and equipment, and then sailed to Kuwait, arriving on March 15, and then returning to Kure Base on April 8.

The leaked data related to the Ohsumi amounted to enough to fill 76 floppy disks. According to an informed source, mail sent by the seaman to his family continued from Feb. 20, when his ship left Muroran, and continued until it returned to Kure Base. He sent well over 100 messages. Much of what he wrote contained specific mention of his duties, such as, "We finished the first stage of transporting vehicles"; and "We seem to be passing the Holmes Straits." He included the port destinations.

As for internal documents, most of what was leaked included the seaman's emergency call nets that contained rosters of individuals on the ship and portable telephone numbers, as well as digital photographs.

(6) Main replies by the US government

NIHON NOGYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
March 1, 2006

Question 1: According to a survey by Intage, major marketing research firm in Japan, more than 90% of consumers said, "The GOJ's recent measures to ban beef imports from the US was a right decision." Even after USDA submission of its report, many Japanese consumers and producers think US countermeasures on BSE are insufficient. Do you think the USG could relieve their anxieties against US beef? Do you have any concrete ideas to promote understanding among the Japanese public on this issue?

Answer: The US has admitted that a mistake was made regarding the shipment of the veal item, which was not in accordance with our agreement, and apologized for this officially. We have submitted an investigative report to the Japanese Government and taken a number of measures to diminish the possibility that this could happen again. With the Japanese public, we seek their understanding by continuing to present facts to give them confidence that the US does produce a safe, nutritious product which is enjoyed by consumers around the world. We hope and believe that (Japanese consumers) will make decisions based on facts rather than emotion. While we are aware of various opinion polls, we also know there are many Japanese who would like the opportunity to enjoy our beef.

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Question 2: The USDA investigative report to the GOJ concludes, "We are confident in our assessment that this ineligible shipment was unique." There are voices among the Japanese public that the ineligible shipment was caused not by simple errors but by structural problems. Do you believe that the USDA action plans could resolve these issues?

Answer: Yes. Of course any time humans are involved in any activity there is a chance for error. The report does document that the export company was informed about the requirements. The report then addresses the problems identified in order to minimize the possibilities that such a mistake could ever be repeated, but we believe our system is very sound overall.

Question 3: The OIG released the audit report regarding safety measures to BSE on February 2, 2006. MAFF Minister Nakagawa, in a Diet session, said that it is necessary for the GOJ to verify the

report by saying, "We are asking the USG about four issues," according to a Diet record. They are "Surveillance," "Clinical inspection of live animals," "SRM," and Downer animals." Would you please tell us the USG response to the GOJ on these questions?

Answer: We are still compiling our responses to these questions and will pass them to the Agriculture Ministry upon receipt.

Question 4: In Japan, there are views that advance inspections by Japanese officials at US processing plants will be a precondition for the resumption of US beef imports. Is the USG ready for accepting Japanese inspection teams? If so, do you think it is possible for the Japanese teams to choose processing plants for their inspection and to conduct surprise inspections?

Answer: Secretary Johanns has already stated that we would favorably consider additional Japanese inspections of our plants (noting that we have already hosted numerous such visits over the past two years). Details on their scope will need to await the overall bilateral discussions on trade resumption, which of course have not commenced.

Question 5: Some Japanese assert that the GOJ should not be so hurry to lift the import ban on US beef and in fact there is a view that the resumption of imports would be half a year later at the earliest. How do you convince these cautious voices among the Japanese public on the resumption of beef trade? Do you think American frustration would be growing if the resumption of beef trade is delayed?

Answer: While the decision on timing is of course for Japan to make, we believe that the facts surrounding the unique nature of this case will in fact support trade resumption in the near future. As I have previously stated we have accepted responsibility for a mistake in that the export requirements were not met. However, Americans are not less concerned about food safety than other people; the difference is in how information on the subject is conveyed and assessed. We consume large quantities of beef with confidence and seek the understanding of our trading partners that decisions be based on science.

Question 6: Japan's Food Safety Commission said in its report last year that the BSE contamination risk in the US would be the same level or even higher than that of Japan, for example,

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between 150% and 700%, considering inadequate feed regulations in the US. What do you think of this assessment?

Answer: The surveillance program we have had in place for the last two years was designed to detect cases within our cattle herd with a very high degree of certainty, according to our experts in this field. It is also important to again remind ourselves that testing of young cattle such as we send to Japan has virtually no meaning, as the test results are not reliable; what protects human health is not testing the animals, but correct removal of the risk materials from the carcasses.

(7) US government responds to Nihon Nogyo Shimbun's questions on beef issue; Eager to resume beef trade; Willing to give positive thought to prior inspections

Nihon Nogyo Shimbun (Page 1) (Full)
March 1, 2006

The US government provided answers Feb. 28 to the Nihon Nogyo Shimbun's six questions pertaining to insufficient BSE-preventive measures taken by the US that led to Japan's ban on beef from the US. The US replies, while accepting responsibility for having included vertebral columns in the shipment of veal items to Japan, expressed its eagerness for an early resumption of beef trade, noting, "We have taken a number of measures to diminish the possibility of this happening again." In response to the Japanese government's call for answers to four items, the US government also made it clear that it will quickly provide them

to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The letter also said that the US would "favorably consider" Japan's prior inspections.

Through its embassy in Tokyo, the US government maintained, "We have identified problems in order to minimize the possibilities that such a mistake could be repeated, but we believe our system is very sound overall." The US called for an early resumption of beef trade saying that the recent incident was an isolated case.

Touching on the fact that Japanese consumers are concerned about the resumption of beef trade, the US underscored the validity of its standpoint by noting, "We hope that (consumers) will make decisions based on facts rather than emotion"; and "There are many Japanese who would like the opportunity to enjoy our beef."

Additionally, the US explicitly noted, "We believe (US beef imports) should be resumed in the near future."

Furthermore, the US strongly criticized Japan's blanket testing of young cattle as "having virtually no meaning, as such test results are not reliable."

Tighter regulations on feed necessary

A comment by Satoshi Kai, professor at Kyushu University Graduate School: The US government should take Japanese consumers' concerns more seriously. In order to resume beef trade, the Japanese government must conduct inspections thoroughly once again. Beef trade requires some conditions, such as allowing only major meatpackers with sufficient facilities to handle Japan-bound beef. The Japanese government must urge the US to tighten regulations on feed.

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(8) US replies on beef issue fail to dispel concerns; Blanket testing labeled as meaningless

NIHON NOGYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Full)
March 1, 2006

Commentary

The Nihon Nogyo Shimbun has received replies from the US government that began with its admission of a "mistake" and "official apology" for the inclusion of backbones in the recent shipment of US beef to Japan in violation of the bilateral agreement. But all in all, the US replies are designed to urge Japan to resume US beef imports at an early date. The US answer is far too insufficient to convince Japanese consumers and producers of the safety of US beef.

On February 17, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) released a report, which brought to light the sloppiness of US inspections, as seen in the fact that inspectors responsible for exports to Japan did not know what had been agreed upon between Tokyo and Washington. The Japanese people have little faith in US beef. The US government must have presumed that pressing Tokyo hard to resume beef trade would only prompt the Japanese people to further turn their backs on US beef, thereby delaying a resumption of beef trade. The US announced that it would accept prior inspections by Japan before the ban on imports was removed in anticipation of such a consequence.

But the US replies clearly indicated that the inclusion of backbones in the Japan-bound shipment resulted from a simple and exceptional mistake and that the preventive measures revealed by the USDA were good enough to prevent a recurrence. The US replies clearly reflect Washington's view that the US system against BSE is very sound overall. However, the US conclusion that Japan's blanket testing of cattle "has virtually no meaning" is likely to draw outcries from Japan.

The US government's position rests on the view that US beef is safe in the first place. The US envisages that as long as it

abides by the Beef Export Verification program allowing only beef from animals up to 20 months with no specified risk materials to reach Japan, follows measures specified in the USDA report more thoroughly, and allows Japan to conduct prior inspections, Tokyo will agree to resuming beef trade at an early time. But the recent incident has drawn strong reactions from Japanese consumers and producers, and the Japanese government remains cautious about resuming beef trade, thinking that the USDA report is insufficient.

The US replies made it clear once again that Washington is not facing up to the BSE risk in the country. The government must not hurriedly resume beef trade without ensuring basic food safety measures for the Japanese people, such as tighter regulations on animal feed.

(9) Editorial: Japan should strive to avoid sanctions being imposed on Iran for its nuclear program

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
March 1, 2006

At a time when Iran's nuclear development program is becoming a

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matter of serious concern, Foreign Minister Mottaki came to Japan and met with Japanese leaders, including Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Foreign Minister Taro Aso, and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Toshihiro Nikai. Japanese leaders, including Koizumi, urged Mottaki to halt his country's uranium enrichment activity, but Mottaki emphasized the legitimacy of such activity, telling them: "We hope for your cooperation to prevent discriminatory treatment regarding our right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Iran's adamant attitude about the nuclear issue is likely to give rise to calls for sanctions at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). We hope Iran will make a wise response to avoid being isolated in the international community.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has adopted a resolution to refer Iran's nuclear issue to the UNSC. On March 6, the IAEA will discuss what the next course of action will be. Japan considers Russia's proposal to transfer the uranium enrichment process from Iran to Russia as a pragmatic approach. In order to pressure Iran to accept the Russian plan, Japan invited Mottaki to come and discuss the issue.

Mottaki, however, went no further than to reiterate his previous claim in meeting with Aso, saying: "We are allowed the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes."

Since the normalization of diplomatic ties with Iran in 1953, Japan, owing to its own efforts, has maintained a good relationship with that country. Japan depends on Iran for about 15% of its overall crude oil imports. For Japan, Iran ranks third in oil suppliers after Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In February 2004, Japan and Iran signed a contract to develop the Azadegan oil field in southwestern Iran, one of the largest oil fields in the Middle East. This contract ensures Japan a large interest in developing energy resources. Japan therefore needs to take care of its relations with Iran in the future, as well.

However, Japan cannot wink at Iran's nuclear-related activities that might lead to its manufacturing nuclear weapons. That is why Japan voted for the IAEA resolution to refer Iran's nuclear issue to the UNSC. It is only natural for Japan to urge Iran to halt its nuclear development program.

Iran has insisted that its nuclear-related activities are all for peaceful purposes. Make no mistake, the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is granted under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). But the first matter for Iran to attend to before proclaiming that right must be to accept IAEA inspections and by so doing, it needs to enhance the transparency of its nuclear program.

Japan uses nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. But before the rest of the world was willing to look at Japan in that context, Japan had to make continuous efforts to win international confidence while observing the NPT rules. Since 2004, integrated safeguards have been applied to Japan. Integrated safeguards are, in short, a certification by the IAEA to show that countries coming under such safeguards do not have any unreported nuclear materials and nuclear activities. It is advisable for Iran to follow Japan's example as a country that uses nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

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Iran revealed that it and Russia had agreed on a plan to launch a joint venture to conduct uranium enrichment. Reportedly, an Iranian delegation has arrived in Moscow to restart negotiations. We hope Iran will come up with a flexible response to resolve its nuclear issue via discussion and dispel international suspicions about it.

Once a decision is made to impose sanctions on Iran, it would cause turmoil in the international economy. What can Japan do to avoid a sanction scenario? One idea would be to take advantage of its good relations with Iran and try to bridge the gap between Iran and Western nations, particularly the United States.

(10) Editorial: Lawmaker Nagata, DPJ grossly negligent

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
March 1, 2006

Lower House member Hisayasu Nagata of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ = Minshuto) held a news conference over the money transfer order e-mail allegedly sent by former Livedoor president Horie, the issue which he brought up during Diet sessions, and he offered an apology, admitting that it was not possible to verify the authenticity of the information. Regarding his course of action, he simply said that he would leave the matter to Secretary General Hatoyama to decide. He is heavily accountable

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for bringing up groundless information and sending the Diet into a melee, backbiting Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Takebe and other persons concerned, saying, "They sold their souls for money." He cannot be forgiven just by offering an apology.

His press conference was extremely awkward. As reasons for having judged that the e-mail at issue was authentic, Nagata cited that (1) the intermediary was a former journalist, and he placed full confidence in this person; (2) according to this intermediary, the person who provided the information was involved in the money transfer; and (3) information on the person involved had also been provided."

If he had judged that the e-mail was authentic, based on such insufficient information, we must say that his information analyzing capability and investigative ability were extremely poor. He admitted that he had never met the intermediary. He also revealed that he had asked the intermediary to provide the electronic documentation of the e-mail, but did not obtain such. Nagata's qualification and aptitude for a lawmaker are being questioned, because he raised questions in the Diet, based on dubious information and an insufficient investigation.

Nagata insisted, "Though it is not possible to prove the authenticity of the e-mail, there is still a possibility of its containing truth." If that is the case, he should reveal that truth to the public as soon as possible. He should not try to avoid resignation from the Diet for no other reason than that.

It would be the usual procedure for any ordinary political party to set up an investigative team to obtain evidence that justifies the authenticity of information like this. Diet Policy Committee Chairman Noda, who gave the green light to Nagata bringing up the

e-mail in the Diet, believing his story, is also heavily responsible. It is only natural for him to step down as diet policy affairs committee chairman.

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Pursuing wrongdoings is an important role the opposition camp is expected to play. To that end, it has to conduct sufficient surveys to support its pursuit. If it was unable to do so, it should be cautious in raising questions in the Diet. If lawmakers pursue allegations in an exaggerated manner, based on vague information, the Diet would become a scandal-exposing battlefield, and will eventually lose the trust of the people. Both the ruling and opposition camps must not forget that Japan's pre-war party politics collapsed, following just such a process.

The DPJ later issued a statement admitting that Horie had never sent that e-mail, and so, it was "not authentic." Party head Maehara offered an apology, but it was too careless for him to categorically say at a party-head debate, "There is certain evidence that proves the authenticity of the e-mail." It will not be easy to rebuild the DPJ. The starting point for that is for Nagata to take responsibility in stark terms.

(11) Toshiba drops plan on coal-fired power plant with ORIX in response to opposition from Environment Ministry

MAINICHI (Top Play) (Full)
February 28, 2006

Toshiba Corporation announced yesterday that it has decided to drop a plan to construct with ORIX Corporation a large-size coal-fired power plant (power output: one million kilowatts) in Ube City, Yamaguchi Prefecture. The company cites the public's growing interest in global environmental protection issues as the main reason for the cancellation of the plan. From the viewpoint of the need to stop global warming, the Environment Ministry has opposed the plan, one official claiming: "A large volume of carbon dioxide (CO2) would be emitted." In response, the company has voluntarily decided to drop the power-generation business plan.

SIGMA POWER Yamaguchi Corporation worked out the plan, under which it would initiate the project in 2009 and set two 500,000 kilowatt-class power stations in operation in 2012. SIGMA POWER was established in April 2003 with 66.8% of the company share held by Toshiba and 33.2% by ORIX.

However, the Kyoto Protocol, which mandates industrialized countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions, came into effect in February of last year. Based on it, the government laid down a program last April to attain the goals set for the nation under the protocol.

The electricity industry, based on its own action program, has earnestly tackled the challenge of reducing CO2 emissions by 7 million tons annually over the five years from 2008. But the Ube electricity plant gives off 5.82 million tons of CO2 annually, a figure equivalent to about 30% of the targeted volume of gases to be reduced over the five years.

In response, the Environment Ministry sent a letter in late January to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), which has jurisdiction over the industry, noting: "The plan is inconsistent with the government's CO2-cutting goals." METI replied that it would be impossible to uniformly restrict coal-use plans because of the nation's energy policy of using a variety of electric sources, but the ministry respected the

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Environment Ministry's advice. Seeing the response of METI, many observers had anticipated that the ministry would instruct the company to review its plan.

Toshiba, though, backed down on its plan voluntarily. In addition to environmental issues, the company has cited as another main reason the problem of costs, reflecting coal prices being 1.5 times higher than those set at the time of the plan drawn up despite the prices of electricity lowering recently.

Strong pressure on Kyoto Protocol

(Commentary)

The case of Toshiba and ORIX is the first case for a power-generation business plan to be cancelled for the reason of the need to contain global warming.

Under the Kyoto mechanisms, the signatories have to attain their respective targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2008. Keeping this in mind, the Environment Ministry is now determined to make severe assessments of the effect of power projects on the environment. The outcome this time is expected to seriously affect the nation's energy policy.

The Environment Ministry focused its attention particularly on the fact that the withdrawn plan was mapped out by a power producer supplier (PPS). Such suppliers are free from the electricity industry's voluntary action program to reduce CO2 emissions.

According to the ministry, another thermal power project by PPS is now under the process of environmental assessment. That is a Konahama thermal power plant in Iwakuni City, Fukushima Prefecture (power output: 400,000 kilowatt). Regarding liquefied natural gas (LNG), three stations are now under construction. In order to acquire the same amount of power from coal and LNG, two times more CO2 is generated from coal than LNG. Once the ministry unconditionally approves the plan for low-priced coal-fired power generation, the brakes might not be applied to the increase in CO2 emissions.

Environment Minister Yuri Koike said in a press conference after a cabinet meeting: "The government has worked out a plan to achieve the targets set in the Kyoto Protocol. (The Toshiba plan is) considerably deviated from our policy direction." As it stands, the Environment Ministry and METI crashed head-on over the Toshiba plan.

The recent case also highlighted the fact that the nation's two major challenges - energy policy and countermeasures against global warming - have been addressed separately in the government. The government is likely to be urged to come up with a new policy to be able to pursue the two challenges simultaneously.

SCHIEFFER